**"States reconsider the death penalty." *American City & County* 1 Mar. 2011. *Student Edition*.Web. 11 Jan. 2012.**

States reconsider the death penalty

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Document Type: Article

Several of the 35 **states** that have **capitalpunishment** are considering replacing the death penalty with life in prison without parole. While advocates say the penalty is ineffective and costly, others argue that the process of trying death penalty cases and carrying out the penalty just needs to be streamlined.

Last month, the Montana Senate passed Senate Bill 185 to eliminate **capitalpunishment** and replace it with life in prison without parole. State Sen. Dave Wanzenried, D-Missoula, author of the bill, said that **capitalpunishment** is very expensive and needs to be discussed. "It's been failing us for decades, and we haven't looked at it," Wanzenried says. "We're on tight budgets. We need to look at [the policy] for no other reason than that."

Montana has two people on death row, and it costs approximately $34,341 a year to house them there, according to the "Fiscal Note 2013 Biennium" brief from the state's Governor's Office of Budget and Program Planning. An execution costs nearly $50,000, and the Montana Office of the State Public Defender often must bring in an outside attorney in death penalty cases, which costs $120 an hour as opposed to $60 an hour for non-death penalty cases, according to the brief.

The majority of members of the Alexandria, Va.-based National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) agree that the death penalty is appropriate for the most horrific of criminals, says NDAA Executive Director Scott Burns. Still, the process should be streamlined and costs reduced by limiting the number of appeals, as Texas and Virginia have done, he says.

NDAA members' primary concerns are for the victims and their families, Burns says, especially when they are still attending court hearings 20 or 30 years later. "Endless appeals are not acceptable," Burns says. "As the saying goes, 'Justice delayed is justice denied.' The way it is now doesn't serve the victims, their families, the taxpayers, or even the defendants."

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Illinois bans death penalty

On March 9, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn signed a law repealing the death penalty. "The evidence presented to me has convinced me that it is impossible to devise a system that is consistent, that is free of discrimination, and that always gets it right," Quinn said in a statement. He also said that since 1977, 20 people on the Illinois death row had been exonerated, seven of whom were exonerated since the state imposed a moratorium on executions in 2000.

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